**Past:**

Have you ever had someone in your life who inspired you to do new things, encouraged you to always try your best, and supported you in all of your decisions? A person who means everything to you and influenced your life so much that you have no idea where you would be if they weren’t in it? For me this person is my dad. He is the one person who I can always turn to and contribute many of my past decisions about education to. Past experiences play a crucial role in shaping the beliefs and ideas that last throughout a person’s life. When thinking about my past education the first person that comes to mind is my dad. My dad instilled in me two very important life lessons. He said that I should always strive to new heights and challenge myself in everything that I do. I can remember being 10 years old and playing softball with him as my coach. There were many games in which these life lessons came into play. One moment that stands out with my dad is when he went back to school to get a Masters degree. The moment when he got this degree was very special to me. Going back to school to receive a higher education is a difficult task for a man who works a full-time job and takes care of his family. Watching him do this was such an inspiration to me. It showed me an example of the beliefs he taught me coming through in something he was doing. This is when I realized the true value of the lessons that he taught me.

These lessons continued to stay with me in high school when I decided that I wanted to become a teacher. I told myself that I would be the best teacher I can be and teach my students not only educational material but also share with them the valuable information that my dad shared with me. This type of information would have been beneficial to many of the people that are in the book *Short Bus* by Jonathan Mooney. When thinking about being a teacher I always pictured myself in front of a classroom of 26 general education students. I imagined that I would be the only teacher in the room and the day would consist of the five basic subject areas. I never imagined such a different scene.

**PRESENT**

When I got accepted to Bloomsburg University I was an Early Childhood Education major. This means that I would have a job teaching an average general education classroom. This is exactly what I wanted and did not think of doing anything else. However, after learning about the dual major program of Early Childhood and Special Education I switched to that. I did not want to be a special education teacher but figured that having a certification in Special Education would be beneficial when trying to get a job. Little did I realize that I would soon have a completely different view on Special Education. Can you imagine a classroom with 10 students, 3 teachers, and 9 individualized education plans? This type of classroom is not your typical classroom and not a class that I would see myself teaching. However, after my involvement in the Best Buddies organization this situation is more appealing to me. Best Buddies is an organization that matches college students with individuals who have exceptionalities. The college students are asked to interact with their buddy each week. This means hanging out or talking to them on the phone. Lifelong friendships are the result of this organization.

I got matched with me buddy Brandon two years ago. He has changed my life ever since. Brandon has become a major part of my life and the experiences I have had with him will stay with me on my journey to working with people with special needs. One moment that stands out when thinking about all the times I spent with Brandon is the first time we went bowling. Bowling with Brandon was inspirational experience. He has multiple disabilities and doesn’t express himself much. However, when we went bowling he turned into a whole different person. He was so excited to bowl and got an amazing score and even did better than me and my friend Chelsea. This is an experience that has given me a better look on how people with disabilities excel in different areas. It shows that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It is someone that I can take with me as I become a teacher and have my own classroom. Another experience that stands out with Brandon is when we had a dance for Best Buddies. Brandon is a dj and loves music. Seeing him in his comfort zone behind a bunch of electronic stereo equipment is something that will stay with me throughout my life. He has shown me how people use their strengths to do things that they are passionate about. This is something that everyone should be aware of. It is an amazing thing how much you can learn about yourself and other people from spending time with just one person.

**FUTURE:**

Country music artist Tim McGraw once stated, “We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere.” This quote applies to my future and the path that I am planning to take. After college I plan on moving forward with my life and becoming a teacher. After my undergraduate years at Bloomsburg I am thinking about doing a master's program to further my education. After completing my Masters program I would like to work with individuals with special needs and plan on having a classroom with students who are both general education students and special education students. This type of a classroom is one artifact that can be used to represent my future. I talk about my buddy Brandon a lot. This is because he is such a big part of my life in college. I consider him to be part of my present influences on my education. However, I know that the times I have spent with him with last throughout my life and continue to inspire me throughout my career as a teacher. The things I have learned from him will help me to become a better teacher. It will help me to understand the need to be compassionate and caring in my classroom. My TELL project in general is also an artifact that represents my future. I decided to do a communication board to put together the three parts of my project. A communication board is something that is frequently used in special education classrooms for students with special needs. A communication board is a perfect way to show my past, present, and future because it is something that will be with me throughout my life.